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ABSTRACT

This report is the result of two years of research by the Task Force on New Professionals of the American College Personnel Association. The Task Force was charged with developing procedures for the greater input and involvement of new professionals in the activities of the national professional associations in the area of college student personnel work. A new professional was defined as someone with less than five years of full-time professional work experience in the area of college student personnel work. The report examines the policies and structures of the professional association in regard to their involvement and consideration of the needs and concerns of new professionals. Following this review a series of recommendations is presented based on the finding of the Task Force. (Author)

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REPORT OF THE

TASK FORCE ON NEW PROFESSIONALS

Task Force VIII

Commission I

American College Personnel Association

Respectfully Submitted
March 27, 1977
Denver, Colorado

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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON NEW PROFESSIONALS

Introduction

The general purpose of most professional societies is to promote the professional development of their particular field of interest. In doing so, there societies seek to provide for the professional development of their members and to increase the body of knowledge relative to their field of interest. Such efforts would appear to logically be most beneficial to the newest members of any given profession, as their professional skills and abilities are in the greatest need of development. In reality however, that assumption is not necessarily true.

Although new professionals are absolutely necessary for the continued existence of professional societies, they are often ignored at best, or sometimes even stigmatized by virtue of their recent entry into the profession. These societies which have sought to be a collective voice for the r professions have become so involved in the development of their own structures and with the immediate challenges posed to their particular field of interest, that they have neglected their primary constituency--the new professional. This situation must be corrected. For the new professional is not only important as the necessary element for the continuation of professional societies, but is in fact that element which will determine the future of all professional soieties.

In reviewing the policies, procedures, and activities of the

American College Personnel Association, the Task Force on New Professionals found the professional association to be guilty of neglect in regard to its new members. The observations which follow concerning the status of new professionals within the association are based on information collected during the 1975-76 and 1976-77 academic years and relevant to those time periods.

Official Policy of the Association

The Association has no offical policy in regard to new professionals. Although all of the officers of the Association indicated a concern for the involvement of the new professional in the activities of the Association, there appears to be no established organizational position regarding the involvement of new professionals in the activities of the Association. This situation allows for tremendous variation within the organizational units of the Association in regard to their concern for new professionals and the involvement of new professionals in their activities.

Organizational Units

Standing Committees

The committees of the Association have no established procedures for involving new professionals in their activities. These units of the Association are viewed by new professionals as the least accessible for membership. Little effort has been made in the past to involve new professionals in these units of the association.

Commissions

These units of the Association were found to be somewhat responsive in regard to new professionals. Two Commissions had

established procedures for involving new professionals in their directorate bodies. Two other Commissions which had no formal procedures for involving new professionals in their directorate bodies did in fact, have a significant number of new professionals as members of those bodies. However, there remained eleven Commissions that did not have significant involvement of new professionals in their directorate bodies. None of the Commissions had any written information sent to new professionals and there were no organized efforts to recruit new professionals as members of the Commissions. Although the Commissions are the only units of the association where membership is readily available to new professionals, their policy making bodies and task forces are dominated by established members of the association. In certain cases, there exists a pseudo-caste system based on personal relationships which serves to thwart the drive of even the most aggressive new professional to become involved in the Commission. One merely needs to review the names of those individuals who have served in positions of responsibility within a Commission for the past four years in order to see, in most cases, that the leadership positions are usually rotated among a rather small group of established members of the association.

It should be noted that several Commission Chairpersons indicated a desire to increase the involvement of new professionals in their organizations. They also indicated a frustration in not knowing how to procede in this regard as there was no established general procedure for informing new professionals of the specific work of the Commissions and the opportunities available to them to become involved in that work.

Task Forces

The established Task Forces of the association actively seek new members. They do not, however, have any established procedures for the significant involvement of new professionals in their activities.

Several Chairpersons suggested that new professionals could become involved in their Task Forces by simply attending their meetings at the annual conventions. This seems like a reasonable proposal until one realizes that at present most meetings of this type are held prior to the official opening of the conference, and are not well publicized in advance of the conference. Consequently, most new professionals arrive at the conference only to find that these meetings have already taken place and their opportunity to participate in such meetings has already expired.

State Organizations

The results of a lack of a consistent association-wide policy on new professionals is best demonstrated by this unit of the national association. The response of state organizations to new professionals varies from excellent to embarrassing with the majority somewhere in-between. The Michigan organization is the best example of what can be achieved when a conscious effort is made to meet their specific needs and concerns. The Michigan College Personnel Association has established a Committee on New Professionals. This Committee's sole purpose is to provide for the involvement, needs, and concerns of new professionals. Through numerous activities, it has demonstrated to the new professional that there is a concern and interest in them and their needs within the formal state organization.

Other state organizations, such as the Georgia College Personnel Association, attempt to provide for the needs of new professionals by integrating appropriate topics and workshops into their programs. They report that they have had no problem in integrating new professionals into their organizations via such methods. Although such efforts are to be respected, it is suggested that such a process does not provide for the optimum involvement of new professionals within the state organizations.

Finally, there are a significant number of state organizations that have no formal procedures for the involvement of new professionals. As a matter of fact, new professionals who become involved in these organizations do so almost in spite of the efforts of the formal organization rather than as a result of such efforts.

Most state units acknowledged the need for greater involvement of new professionals in their organizations. Most of these units reported problems in regard to not having the funding or manpower necessary to establish a program oriented to the recruitment and involvement of new professionals. All units were interested in suggestions for improving their relationships with new professionals.

Association Literature

Journals and Publications

Opportunities exist for new professionals to publish and they are encouraged to do so. However, articles are selected on the basis of their appeal to the general readership of each publication and, with the exception of ACPA Developments, this criteria usually eliminates articles oriented to the specific concerns of new professionals. With the exception of the ACPA Journal, no procedures are highlighted to encourage new

professionals to seek appointments to editorial boards or to become affiliated with editorial staffs. Although extensive involvement of new professionals does not appear to be desirable or functional within the editorial boards of our various publications, greater exposure of the procedures and requirements for such involvement would seem to be beneficial to a large segment of the membership of the association. The selection of articles for inclusion in our various publications based on their appeal to new professionals would also seem to be a reasonable and defensible proposition.

Literature Distributed to New Members

The present packet distributed to new members is ineffective as a tool for involving new members in the activities of the Association. The literature presented does not explain how one should go about becoming involved in the Association's activities. Nor does it present an accurate picture of the opportunities for involvement. Too many items are included in this initial packet which are totally unrelated to the task of introducing and involving new members in the activities of the Association. This initial contact with a new member has a significant effect on the new member's conception of the Association and his/her expectations in regard to the Association. Consequently, the literature included in this packet should present the best possible impression of the Association. The future of the Association and its general effectiveness depends on the integration and involvement of new members in the formal structures of the Association. There is no better opportunity to accomplish this than through this initial contact.

The present membership application brochure encourages a passive rather than an active membership in the Association. This brochure is

inaccurate in regard to the present operational procedures of the Association. It should be revised to stress a more active role for all members of the Association and include information concerning opportunities for involvement.

Convention Programs

Special Programs

The traditional provision for new professionals at ACPA Conferences has been a social-hour program of some type. Although the provision of free beverages and a temporary respite from the traumas of job-seeking are viewed as physically beneficial to new members, such a format with no related activity is not in the best interests of the Association or its new members. Some programs in the past have been connected with an introduction of the Association's leadership. This added facet greatly improved the viability of such programs and should be continued.

Another program which has been presented at past conventions is a general introduction to the Association. The format of such programs has been to have the leadership of the Association discuss how new members could become involved in the Association. While such efforts are indeed admirable, they appear to have been less effective than having specific units of the Association explain their purpose, programs, and opportunities for involvement. Moreover, the program of having the leadership explain opportunities for involvement could be effectively incorporated into the social-hour format.

The format which appears to be most effective in introducing new professionals to the opportunities available to them for involvement are those presented by specific units of the Association. Several Commissions last year presented programs explaining their purpose, activities, and

opportunities for involvement. These programs were most beneficial to new professionals (as many of them arrived too late at the convention to participate in the Commission meetings) and should be continued and expanded to include all operational units of the Association, particularly Commissions, Standing Committees, and Task Forces.

General Programs

Of all the groups within the Association, there is no doubt that new professionals are in most need of development in regard to their general skills and abilities as professionals. However, a quick review of the last four convention brochures will show that there were relatively few programs presented which were oriented to the development of basic skills and abilities. The needs and concerns of new professionals are often forgotten in the attempt to provide the most generally attractive or the most contemporary programs at the convention. The value of such programs cannot be argued. Nevertheless, too often new professionals find themselves having to attend programs explaining new developments which they do not have the basic skills to implement. If the Association is to serve its entire constituency and if it is to aid in the development of its new members, some attention must be given to presenting programs at national conventions which are oriented to the needs and concerns of new professionals. For although such presentations are not as glamorous as introducing a particularly innovative technique, they are indeed one of the basic purposes of national professional associations.

New Professionals

The Population

One of the most difficult tasks encountered by this Task Force was the determination of the number of Association members who could be

categorized as New Professionals. The lack of general availability of this information posed a considerable problem in determining the constituency with which we were to be concerned. Indirect data had been collected and interpreted.

According to studies conducted by Commission XII of ACPA, it was determined that one could forecast that approximately 700 to 850 new professionals will enter the field each year during the next few years. This figure was based on the number of people graduating from student personnel programs in the past few years minus a percentage which accepted positions in fields other than student personnel. Even if one assumes the lowest figure and possibly decreases that number as a result of declining availability of professional positions, the figure is still significant as a potential segment of ACPA's total membership.

Perhaps more important, figures received from the central office of APGA indicate that ACPA had 1913 student members during the fiscal year 1976. This group which will soon become professionals and decide whether or not to continue their membership in ACPA should be of considerable importance to the Association. Consequently, if only on the basis of the number of new professionals entering the profession each year or on the number of graduate students who presently are members of the Association, a case can easily be made that the Association would be well-served by the development of an overall policy and program for the greater involvement of this constituency in its activities. If in fact the projections of some forecasters that the number of student personnel professionals will decrease in the next decade is true, the recruitment and retention of this category of members will become quite important to the continued productivity and prominence of the Association.

It was most disheartening to the Task Force that figures for the number of members of ACPA with less than five years of experience were unavailable. It is suggested that if this number was determined, the true importance of new professionals as a significant segment of the total ACPA membership could be easily seen and the value of this constituency in regard to the future of the Association could not be discounted.

Policies and Programs of Related Professional Associations

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

NASPA is divided into seven regions, and it can be said that it has seven distinct approaches to new professionals. These approaches vary, as with our Association, from excellent to embarrassing. However, there are several innovative established procedures which are worthy of consideration. Each region has a membership chairman who actively seeks to recruit new professionals into the Association. One region sends each new member a personal letter of welcome from the State NASPA Director. Another region solicits the involvement of new members on committees and recognizes new members at their regional meeting at the annual convention. In one region new members are invited by the Regional Vice-President to serve on advisory committees, and several regions annually conduct one-day drive-in workshops specifically devoted to the needs and concerns of new professionals. Finally, one region publishes a newsletter which is composed of articles written by new professionals. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an opportunity for new professionals to communicate their ideas to other professionals in the field.

On a national level, NASPA conducts an orientation program for new members at its annual convention and is presently in the process of developing a comprehensive handbook for new members which will explain the

organizational units of the Association, and contain instructions on how to become an active member of the Association.

National Association of Women Deans, Administrators & Counselors

Most of NAWDAC's efforts in regard to new professionals take place at the National Conference. New members wear a distinctive name tag and two special programs are presented to introduce new members to the organization, its conference, and its leadership. Each conference evaluation sheet contains a request for members to volunteer for committee work and an appropriate space for them to indicate their area of interest. NAWDAC does seem to have a special interest in graduate students as they have a graduate student advisory council and have surveyed all their graduate student members on several occasions to determine their needs and concerns.

Association of College and University Housing Officers

ACUHO has an official policy of involving new members in the activities of the Association. Members are invited to become active on various committees and task forces. There seems to be conscious effort to involve all new members in the activities of the Association.

Task Force Surveys

In order to gain some insight into the perceptions and expectations of the Association held by new professionals, the Task Force conducted two surveys. The first survey focused on the membership of a single, somewhat representative Commission (Commission I), while the second survey was national in scope and presented to the entire membership. Although neither survey received responses from a majority of the groups questioned, several informative pieces of information evolved from the responses received.

These observations are offered not as definitive statements but as credible indicators of certain patterns and trends which exist within our Association.

Commission Survey

A questionnaire was sent to the 180 members of Commission I. This survey focused on Commission I members' backgrounds and their perceptions of ACPA and Commission work. Approximately 25 percent (45) of the membership responded. The following observations are offered for your consideration:

1. Twenty-four percent of those responding had five years or less of full-time professional experience.
2. Forty-two percent of those responding had been members of ACPA for five years or less.
3. Thirty-eight percent of those responding had been members of Commission I for five years or less.
4. Eighteen percent of those responding indicated that their involvement in Commission I was the direct result of attending a national ACPA convention.
5. Forty percent of those responding had served on a Commission I Task Force.
6. Thirty-three percent of those responding indicated that they were involved in the activities of at least one other Commission.
7. Only five percent of those responding who could be classified as new professionals had served in some leadership capacity in the Commission.
8. Seventy-eight percent of those responding felt that their involvement in the Association and Commission had been beneficial to their professional development.

9. Seventy-one percent of those responding indicated that they believed that new professionals did not have the same opportunities as more experienced members to assume leadership positions in the Association or the Commission.

National Survey

The purpose of this survey was to determine the members' perceptions and expectations of the Association. The perceptions and expectations of new professionals were to be isolated and compared with a representative sample of professionals who have been members of ACPA for ten years or more. The questionnaire used in the survey was printed in the October 15th, 1976, issue of ACPA Developments and all members of the Association were requested to respond to the questionnaire.

A total of 265 completed responses were received. Consequently, the decision to seek additional responses was made and a copy of the questionnaire will be included in the registration packet at the 1977 Convention in Denver. Members will be asked to complete the survey if they did not previously do so and return it to a location easily accessible to convention registrants. The responses will be collated, the data tabulated, and a final report presented as soon as possible. Your cooperation in encouraging all convention registrants to complete and return the questionnaire will be appreciated.

SUMMARY

The lack of a formal, consistent, Association-wide policy in regard to new professionals has resulted in tremendous variation within the organizational units of the Association as to their consideration and involvement of new professionals. There is evidence of benign neglect

being practiced by many units of the Association. However, there is also evidence that almost all of the individuals who hold leadership positions within the Association are interested in improving the status of new professionals. These individuals state that they are interested in increasing the involvement and input of new professionals in the activities of the Association. But they also indicate that they lack direction in regard to how this may be achieved. In an attempt to provide some concrete suggestions by which the involvement and input of new professionals in the activities of the American College Personnel Association may be increased, the Task Force on New Professionals respectfully submits the following recommendations for your consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Executive Council adopt a resolution indicating the Association's commitment to the involvement and consideration of new professionals in its activities.
2. The Executive Council adopt a resolution which would require all organizational units of the Association to encourage and provide opportunities for the involvement of new professionals in their activities.
3. The Executive Council should solicit input from new professionals regarding their needs and concerns and incorporate those items into the general goals of the Association.
4. The Executive Council should request the Central APGA Office to compile a statistical profile of new professionals and graduate student members. This information would be most valuable in projecting the future of ACPA's membership and in determining the extent of attention due this segment of the Association's constituency.

5. The Executive Council should conduct a survey of faculty members in graduate training programs to determine how graduate students are encouraged to become actively involved in professional associations. As the number of graduates in student personnel work is expected to decline, this information could become invaluable to the recruitment and maintenance of the Association's membership.

Commissions

6. Each Commission should adopt a policy whereby at least one position on their directorate body be held by a new professional.
7. Each Commission should conduct a study of its members. This study should focus on the tenure of members within the Commission and the Association and the extent of the members' professional experience. Such data should enable the Commission to better determine the needs of its membership and, consequently, be more responsive to those needs. It should also help each Commission to determine if its directorate body is representative of its membership and if its membership included an appropriate number of new professionals.
8. Commission meetings at the annual convention should be extensively publicized. Notices of these meetings should appear in Association publications as far in advance of the convention as possible and should receive publicity equal to that given other segments of the convention. These notices should contain a statement encouraging all those interested in joining a Commission and becoming active in its activities to attend these meetings. Such information would enable new professionals and other members of the Association to plan their arrival times and activities in such a way that they could participate in these meetings and become involved in the activities of the Commissions.

State Organizations

9. State organizations should establish a unit (committee, task force, etc.) which will be concerned with the new professionals within that state. Such units should seek to determine the needs and concerns of new professionals within the state and to develop programs and activities to meet those needs and concerns. The establishment of such units would be a tangible indication of the organization's interest in new professionals. Since all indications point to further reductions in travel funds, it appears that activities within the state organization will become substantially more important for new professionals. Consequently, the establishment of a unit to be concerned with this group will better enable state organizations to respond to the projected demand for services which will be forthcoming from this segment of their constituencies.

10. Efforts should be made within the state organizations to present programs and services which are of particular interest and benefit to new professionals. Since these units of the Association are the most accessible to new professionals, they have the greatest potential for meeting the needs of new professionals and for providing opportunities for new professionals to become involved in the activities of the Association. They also can provide the opportunity for new professionals to become acquainted with professional colleagues and to enjoy the benefits of the professional relationships made possible through membership in a national professional association at the absolute minimum cost. The state organizations are the new professional's primary link with the national association and they need to be responsive to that situation.

Literature

11. A brochure should be designed that will be mailed to all new members

of the Association. The specific purpose of this brochure will be to explain the activities of the Association and how new members should go about becoming involved in those activities.

12. The brochure to be sent to new members should be significantly different from the present ACPA brochure which contains a membership application and is oriented to the recruitment of new members. The brochure for new members should contain a listing of all the organizational units of the Association, a description of the purpose of each unit, and a detailed explanation of how new members can become involved in the activities of those units.

13. The initial packet received by new members of the Association should contain the descriptive brochure, an invitation to become involved in the activities of the Association, the Association's By-Laws, and the Association's Ethical Standards. All advertisements, catalogues, and other supplemental information should be sent in a separate mailing at a later date.

14. Each Commission should develop a brochure which describes the purpose and activities of the Commission, outlines the opportunities for involvement in those activities, and explains in detail the actions that should be taken to become involved in the activities of the Commission. This brochure should contain specific and current information. Consequently, it is recommended that these brochures be inexpensively prepared and revised annually.

15. A packet of Commission brochures should be distributed to all new members through the office of the Vice-President for Commissions. An invitation to become involved in the Commission structure should accompany the brochures. Such a mailing would provide new members with accurate and current information regarding the activities of

the Commissions and the opportunities for involvement available through the Commissions.

16. Each state organization should develop a brochure to be sent to new members which describes the state organization, its activities, and the opportunities for involvement in the state organization.

17. Each state organization should receive the names and addresses of all new members within that state. These new members should then be sent the descriptive brochure, a letter of welcome, and an invitation to become more involved in the activities of the state organization. It would also be most helpful to new professionals if they could receive a list of fellow members in the same geographic area as themselves.

Convention Programs

18. Convention programs which are designed to meet the needs and concerns of new professionals should be somehow distinguished in the convention brochure as to indicate the Association's concern for providing such programming appropriate to new professionals.

19. Each Commission should adopt a policy whereby they sponsor at least one convention program each year which is oriented to the needs and concerns of new professionals in their respective areas.

20. The Convention Program Committee should adopt as one of its criteria for selection the extent to which certain programs address the needs and concerns of new professionals.

21. The Convention Program Committee should adopt as one of its goals the inclusion in the convention program of an appropriate number of programs which are designed to meet the needs and concerns of new professionals.

22. Each Commission should make a commitment to present a program at each

convention which describes the purpose and structure of the Commission, outlines the present activities of the Commission, indicates opportunities for becoming involved in those activities, and explains in detail the actions one needs to take to become involved in the Commission and its activities.

23. The format of the traditional graduate social hour held at the convention should be revised to include an introduction of the leadership of the Association and short remarks by them concerning the opportunities for becoming involved in the Association and the Association's general concern and interest in new professionals.

24. An orientation program for new professionals and new members of the Association should be held at the beginning of each convention. This program should be an introduction to both the Association and to its convention. It should explain the services available from the Association and the opportunities available for becoming involved in its activities. The program should also explain how one can achieve the optimum benefit from attendance at the national convention.

25. The results of the national survey, presently being conducted by the Task Force on New Professionals, should be distributed upon completion to all individuals who hold a leadership position within the Association. Hopefully, this survey which will compare the perceptions and expectations of the Association held by new professionals with those held by members with ten years or more of membership in the Association, will provide a credible indication of the needs and concerns of new professionals.

AMERICAN COLLEGE PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION

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